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SUBJECT: CALLS IN NEW YORK FOR SECURITY COUNCIL TO ACT ON
GAZA

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, for reasons 1.4 b/d.

(C) Summary: A delegation of Arab foreign ministers held a round of separate meetings with the permanent five members of the Security Council on January 5, 2009 to press them to adopt within two days a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. Some members of the Arab delegation, which included the head of the Arab League, Amr Moussa, said they could not return to their capitals without a resolution or a call for an immediate ceasefire. Following the meeting with the Arab group, Ambassadors Khalilzad and Wolff met with Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to discuss the Council's options for the coming days and later with the French and British UN Perm Reps to negotiate a plan of work for the Council in light of the Arab and other foreign ministers' visits to New York. The UK Perm Rep pressed for immediate Council action calling for a ceasefire, but France preferred not to hastily prepare a resolution prior to the work of President Sarkozy and other envoys in the region. End summary.

(SBU) On January 5, 2009 a delegation Arab foreign ministers held a round of separate meetings with the permanent five members of the Security Council on January 5, 2009 to press them to adopt within two days a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. Amr Moussa, the Secretary General of the League of Arab States, led the meeting. He was flanked by the Foreign Ministers of Jordan, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, and UAE, the Qatari Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, and Ambassadors from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. Moussa opened the meeting stating that the Security Council is the primary organ responsible for solving the crisis in Gaza and delay and no action is not an option.

(SBU) The delegation signaled a high degree of flexibility on the content of a resolution, provided that a ceasefire was the immediate outcome. They suggested two possible options: a single resolution calling for a ceasefire and laying out the comprehensive elements to tackle the long-term issues, or a two-step approach with the Council calling for a ceasefire first and then later negotiating a resolution considering the long-term issues.

(SBU) Libyan Foreign Minister Shalgam gave the most impassioned intervention of the meeting. He said that those present could not return to their capitals with nothing to show for their efforts because doing so would lead to a victory for the Islamists in their countries who do not believe in negotiation. He reiterated Moussa's point by emphasizing that an immediate ceasefire was the only acceptable outcome.

(C) Following the meeting with the Arab Foreign Ministers, Secretary General Ban told Ambassador Khalilzad he was sympathetic to Israel's position, even if he would then be forced to shore up his image in the Arab world by reacting to Israel's ground operation in Gaza. He said he was worried about the Europeans seizing the initiative at the expense of

the US and urged that the US shape the diplomatic battlefield with its own initiative. He strongly recommended that Secretary of State Rice attend the January 6 afternoon meeting of the Security Council with Abu Mazen. Ban said he plans to visit Israel, Ramallah, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria the week of January 12 and offered his assistance if the US needed him.

(C) At a P3 meeting held later at the French Mission, attended by the French Perm Rep Jean-Maurice Ripert and British Perm Rep John Sawers, Ambassadors Khalilzad and Wolff discussed a plan of work for the Council in light of the Arab and other foreign ministers' visits to New York. Ambassador Sawers pushed for quick action on a resolution calling for a ceasefire, in line with the Arab foreign ministers' request. However, Ambassador Ripert indicated that France was closer to the USG's position because in his view a hasty adoption of a resolution could jeopardize the diplomatic mission of French President Sarkozy who was in the region. Ripert argued that Sarkozy needed time to speak with all the parties before adopting a position in New York. The Ambassadors also discussed options for the P5 to hold meetings with key Arab countries as a way to stave off a rush to a Security Council resolution. To balance that strategy, the Ambassadors proposed a P5 meeting including Israel and Turkey.

(C) Comment: With moderate support from the UK, the Arab delegation clearly desires a Security Council call for a ceasefire. The French were supportive of the US position, although Ripert was quick to emphasize that much will depend on the outcome of Sarkozy's visit to the region, which ends on January 6. The Arabs appear ready to support any

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resolution that calls for a ceasefire, even if the eventual resolution results in a US veto.

Khalilzad